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ABSTRACT

Alcohol use is three times greater among Indian youth than among adolescents in general. Research suggests that an adolescent's decisions concerning substance abuse may be tied to self-esteem and to peer associations and activities. This booklet examines three types of programs that have been successful in building positive self-concepts and peer support groups among Native American youth. The Eastern Band of Cherokee (North Carolina) sponsors the Cherokee Challenge program. This program involves 45 adolescents and their families in weekly meetings and monthly outdoor challenge activities that foster self-confidence, problem-solving skills, and group communication and trust. Working with an outreach worker, the Pascua Yaqui tribe in southern Arizona has adapted the national Girl Scout program to its community needs. The national organization provided assistance in getting the local program organized, training for volunteer leadership, program materials, access to camping facilities, and recognition for scouts and leaders through established awards and achievement programs. Window Rock Public High School on the Navajo Reservation (Arizona) has a peer support program for youth struggling with problems of their own or someone else's substance abuse. Groups of about seven students and two trained adult facilitators meet weekly to help students explore their self-identity and cultural identity, build self-worth, and reinforce good choices. Contact information is provided for each program. (SV)

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# POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM CAN PROTECT NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

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# *Positive Self-Esteem Can Protect Native American Youth*

## *How Can We Help?*

# *Introduction*

Indian youth use alcohol at a rate three times that of adolescents in the general population.

Research data is beginning to accumulate which indicate that the choices a youngster makes concerning alcohol and substance abuse are tied in some way to his self-esteem and to the source of this esteem. People who work with Native American youngsters are increasingly concerned that many Indian young people suffer from low self-esteem.

Some substance abuse prevention specialists feel that the risks faced by Indian youth can be lowered if the youngster's self-esteem can be increased and if the source of this esteem carries with it sanctions discouraging alcohol and substance abuse.

Building positive self-esteem, through involving youngsters in programs which provide this esteem through substance-free activities, has thus become a primary strategy for helping Indian young people avoid choices which lead to alcohol and substance abuse.

This booklet looks at three types of programs being used to build positive self-esteem in Native American youngsters. The programs described include: a tribally-sponsored physical challenge program; a

local chapter of Girls Scouts; and peer support groups for Indian students.

All of these programs are dedicated to building the self-esteem of their participants in a manner which promotes healthy life-choices.

# *The Data on Self-Esteem*

In concrete terms, self-esteem is hard to measure and there is not a great deal of data available to explain how it functions in helping Native American youth make choices about alcohol and substance abuse.

Researchers, however, are beginning to turn more and more attention toward the idea that the source of an Indian youngster's self-esteem is of prime importance in determining his risk for alcohol and substance abuse.

For example, Willie Wolf of the Western Behavioral Studies program at Colorado State University says that recent studies there indicate that a youngster may gain self-esteem through belonging to a peer group which is involved with drug and alcohol abuse. The youngster—because of positive feelings resulting from his acceptance and participation in this group—may test high in self-esteem. Unfortunately, however, his high self-esteem—in this case—increases his risk for drug and alcohol abuse.

The idea that the source of a youngster's self-esteem is critically important is supported by data from a 1985 study of 2,000 Native American adolescents by Velma Garcia Mason, now Special Assistant to the Director of the Office of Indian Education within the Department of Education.

Mason found that Indian youth whose self-concepts were based upon strong family-oriented affiliations and tribal identity tended to choose not to use substances. In cases where these youth did try alcohol and drugs, they rarely continued beyond the first trial.

On the other hand, youngsters whose self-images were based solely on peer relationships were at significantly higher risk for substance abuse. This was particularly true for youth whose self-image included that of "pan-Indian" which defined Indian as a "disadvantaged minority."

Mason concluded that, in situations where a youngster derives his self-concept from peer associations, the youngster's risk for substance abuse is greatly influenced by the type of peer associations and the activities the group chooses. "The data suggests," Mason adds, "that some adolescent peer groups may use alcohol and marijuana for social purposes. We suspect that these groups may be those which are made up of youngsters who have an absence of any meaningful or significant family or tribal identity."

# *Implications for Substance Abuse Prevention*

What do these ideas mean in terms of designing programs and activities to help Indian youngsters make positive choices about alcohol and substance abuse?

Gay Munsell, a Native American child development specialist with the National Resource Center for Youth Services at the University of Oklahoma in Tulsa, has several ideas.

She believes that programs will help Indian young people increase their self-esteem in a manner which guides them toward healthy life choices if the programs:

- support group involvement which provides peer relationships that do not permit alcohol or drug use;
- recognize and support the youngster's identification with his family and tribe;
- and, focus on active, positive goals.

Emphasis on cooperative group involvement supports the very important value which tribal people place on working together and caring for one another. Indian youngsters feel most comfortable, and therefore better about themselves, in environments and structures which reinforce these concepts which their culture feels are of primary importance.

Indian youth also profit, Munsell feels, by involvement in activities which incorporate the rules and codes which govern interaction between Indian people. These, Munsell reminds us, are vastly different than the rules and codes that work for non-Indians.

Indian youngsters, for example, respond best to situations which are clearly delineated in terms of roles, respectful of personal limits, and controlled by socializing and humor as opposed to confrontation.

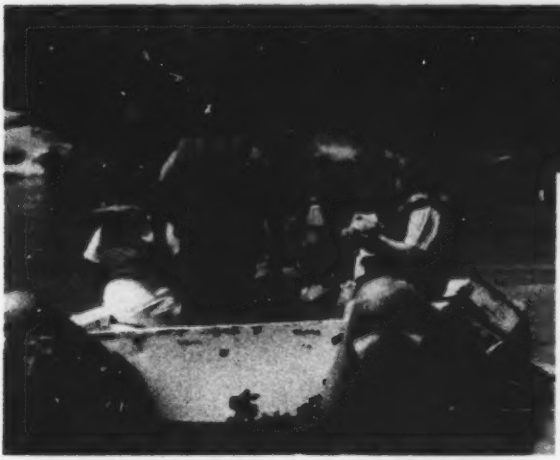
They are uncomfortable dealing with the jockeying and power struggles that go on as non-Indian youth settle into their respective roles in a group. Indian youngsters feel more comfortable when they have, from the start, a clear idea of the role and status of everyone in the group. This eliminates competition which the youngsters view as threatening and divisive.

Indian adolescents feel best about themselves, Munsell suggests, when they are engaged in cooperative group activities which focus on a particular purpose such as craftmaking, theater production, dance, basketball, boat crewing and other outdoor-oriented activities.

The following sections of this booklet provide examples of three types of tribal programs which are being successful in helping to increase the self-esteem of the youngsters involved in them.

These programs include: programs which build individual self-confidence through the accomplishment of challenging outdoor group activities; programs which work toward helping youngsters feel better about themselves through participation in national organizations like the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, 4-H and Campfire Girls; and programs which increase self-esteem through peer support groups.

# Physical Challenges Bolster Self-Esteem



*Tribes across the country are recognizing that their culture and physical environment often provide the perfect setting for exciting, challenging outdoor activities for young people.*

Stimulating activities—like the river rafting being enjoyed above by Hualapai tribal youth and others on the Colorado River—provide excitement and feelings of accomplishment which increase a participant's self-esteem. Safety precautions taken as part and parcel of the activity underscore the message that there is no place for alcohol or substance abuse in this accomplishment.

The example provided on the following pages shows how the Eastern Band of Cherokee are utilizing their reservation's outdoor environment as a means of challenging tribal youth and increasing their self-esteem.

**CHEROKEE CHALLENGE**

Eleven years ago, officials of the Eastern Band of Cherokee in North Carolina became concerned that

local youth lacked confidence and pride in themselves.

"At the time," says Earl Davis, counseling psychologist for the Unity Regional Youth Treatment Center, "we had been doing some testing of Cherokee kids in the 7th through 9th grades and found that these kids were scoring significantly lower in self-confidence than the population at large. This concerned us because we believed low self-confidence left these youngsters ill-prepared to make sound decisions and made them candidates for delinquent behavior."

Davis, who was the first coordinator for the Cherokee Challenge, said the tribe contacted a local mental health clinic with their concern about the low self-esteem scores. The clinic responded with a design for "therapeutic outings."

These therapeutic outings, Davis explains, were 2-3 day outdoor activities which involved some sort of challenging, strenuous physical exercise during the day followed by an evening campfire in which a mental health counselor led a discussion of the day's problems and accomplishments.

"We were impressed," continues Davis, "by the results of these outings. The kids who participated took pleasure in having accomplished what they considered a difficult task. They enjoyed themselves, and the tribal people observing the program felt the kids had gained better attitudes about themselves."

As staff from the Eastern Band of Cherokee examined the results of these first outings, they decided that the concept was worth pursuing. Over the next ten years, the Cherokee Challenge has become a prominent part of the reservation community, and today youngsters who are lucky enough to participate in the Challenge speak with confidence and pride about whitewater rafting on the famous Nantahala, rappelling off right angle cliffs, exploring the labyrinths of underground caves, and backpacking in the Great Smokies.

"As the program developed," Davis explains, "we began to see that alcohol and substance abuse lay at the base of most of the delinquent behavior being experienced here. And we became more and more convinced, as we saw results from our Challenge

activities, that improving a child's self-esteem through the accomplishment of a vigorous physical goal had a direct effect on reducing a youngster's risk for abusing alcohol and other chemicals."

"In fact," adds Davis, "the Challenge concept has now been expanded so that we are using it not only for alcohol prevention, but also as a treatment approach in our adolescent residential treatment program."

The basic principles on which the Challenge is founded match pretty closely those which Gay Munsell advocates as being important in helping Indian young people develop positive self-concepts.

The Challenge seeks to improve the self-images of its participants through active, goal-oriented physical challenges which prohibit substance abuse and require group cooperation for success. The activities are undertaken in a manner which utilizes Cherokee tradition and family members are encouraged to join one another in the activities. Although the youngsters are invited into the program's decision-making and planning, adults are present to act as leaders.

Tom Hill, who is presently directing the in-school and summer Cherokee Challenge program, says there are currently about 45 youngsters participating regularly in weekly meetings and in once-a-month outdoor challenge activities.

During the weekly meetings, the youth and their leaders decide what challenge activity the group will undertake that month. Frequently selected activities include camping, canoeing, whitewater rafting, caving and ropework. The youngsters have also chosen to do such things as making blowguns, constructing sweatlodges, and even cutting firewood for elderly tribal members.

Hill says the program has recently expanded to encourage family members to participate. "We were finding," he says, "that parents didn't fully understand what we were trying to accomplish. In fact, we discovered that parents were basically unaware of the risks their youngsters faced in terms of alcohol and substance abuse. They'd be wide-eyed with amazement when we'd visit and talk about the subject."

As a result, the Cherokee Challenge is now making considerable effort to involve families in the program's activities. One of the most impressive ways they have done this is through including parents and siblings in the adventure process.

"In the last two years," Hill says, "we've taken about 20 families through our ropes course. We do the same things with the families as we do with adolescents, working on developing the same interaction and communication skills."

There are 15 elements, or activities, in the ropes course. The first 10 are within 4-5 feet of the ground and the last five are 30-40 feet above ground. All of the activities involve group problem solving, figuring out how to get all members from one place to another over the ropes. Problem-solving, communication, feedback skills and trust are primary requirements for accomplishing the course.

"There's a lot of trepidation among group members when they arrive for the start of the ropes course. People start out feeling pretty intimidated and, when a group finishes, everyone feels really good about it. The fun of accomplishment is there," Hill says, "but a lot of the satisfaction experienced comes from having worked as a group. Attention has had to go into utilizing the strengths of individuals for the good of the group; and weaknesses, most of which show themselves as fear of high places, must be acknowledged and supported in a non-critical manner."

Hill emphasizes that the risks participants are exposed to are "perceived" risks. "Challenge participants perceive the activities they are involved in as high-risk, but our staff and group leaders provide structure and procedures which make all of the activities safe. We've never had an injury on the ropes course, although most people find a real thrill in the situations they encounter."

Cherokee Challenge experiences show Cherokee youth that they can get through difficult tasks and get through them well. In the process, the youngsters become aware that there are leaders upon whom they

can depend until they are ready themselves to go it alone.

"The Challenge," says Hill, "teaches a combination of trust and self-confidence. It makes youngsters better decision-makers. The skills they learn are skills which can incorporated into the rest of their lives. The Challenge gives them tools that will help them make good choices when they are faced with tough decisions concerning things like alcohol and substance abuse."

Information on the Cherokee Challenge program may be obtained from its Director, Tom Hill, PO Box 507, Cherokee, NC 28719. Telephone: (704) 497-7291. FAX: (704) 497-5333.

# National Programs Offer Self-Esteem

*Throughout the US, tribes have joined hands with national youth organizations which provide a framework for local self-actualization and esteem-building programs.*

Wholesome activities—like the river wading being experienced by these Sac & Fox and Seminole youth at a national American Indian Boy Scouting/Girl Scouting Seminar in Arizona—provide fun as these youngsters share interests and ideas. The structure and principles of the national scouting program send strong messages that alcohol and substances are unhealthy and unnecessary.

The example provided on the following pages shows how the Pascua Yaqui tribe in southern Arizona is adapting the national Girl Scout program to its community and its needs. Feedback from participating girls and their parents has convinced tribal leaders that scouting has benefited the youngsters.

A large number of organizations have building a

youngster's self-esteem as a primary goal. Some of these organizations are firmly established and have operated successfully for years. Many have resources which are available to Indian communities. These organizations include Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts USA, Campfire Inc., and 4-H for example.

**GIRL SCOUTING AT PASCUA YAQUI**

"To feel good about themselves, young people need to have something fun to do. They need to be involved."

About two years ago, Pascua Yaqui leaders began to feel special concern for the youth in their communities. "There are limited opportunities for constructive involvement here and limited activities for young people to pursue their interests or build their self-confidence," says Sylvia Harlan, a tribal social services youth worker.

"I am working, through a program funded by the State of Arizona, with tribal youth. By our funding regulations, we are able to keep the youth in our program for one year only. Then we move on to new kids. The program helps tremendously but we worried about our 'graduates.' There were no organized activities for them. They were being left out."

So Harlan went to the yellow pages and to her directory of human resources. She made telephone calls and asked: "What can you help us do for the youth in our community?" One organization found was the Girl Scouts.

The Girl Scouts is a well-established national organization with over 3 million members in the United States. For over 75 years, Girl Scouts USA, like the Boy Scouts of America, has helped young people in the US recognize their talents and capabilities while helping them serve their communities. Importantly, the organizations have been working to develop a flexibility and a dedicated respect for the cultural diversity of the youth they serve. It is these things that make Pascua Yaqui leaders think that Girl Scouts has something to

offer their communities.

When Sylvia Harlan telephoned the Girl Scouts, she was put in touch with Juan Rascón, Field Director for the Sahuaro Girl Scout Council in Tucson.

Rascón is an outreach worker. His job is to help rural and minority communities establish and maintain Girl Scout troops. "I do the legwork," Rascón says. "Since Pascua Yaqui contacted the Girl Scouts, I've spent a lot of time visiting in the tribal communities. I've spent a lot of one-on-one time talking with council members, youth leaders, and parents. My job is to explain the Girl Scout program and gain adult understanding and support for it."

"Juan meets us more than half-way," says Sylvia Harlan. "He's a good community development facilitator. In the past, he worked a lot organizing migrant worker programs. He's familiar with our tribe. He's taken a lot of time to talk with us and to get to know our community values. And that shows a great deal in the type of activities we have begun to offer through Girl Scouts."

Harlan emphasizes that Juan has helped the Pascua Yaqui create a Girl Scout program that meets their specific needs. Last summer, the program opened in New Pascua Village with a week-long day camp program. Twenty five girls attended. A non-Yaqui Girl Scout leader, Lydia Bojorquez, volunteered to coordinate the camp and to train interested Yaqui adults to become scout leaders.

The 1989 summer camp offered activities designed to meet needs and interests identified by the Pascua Yaqui community members who talked and worked with Juan Rascón. The camp agenda was varied; it included songs, games, craft sessions and sessions that addressed value clarification and decision-making through puppetry.

"All our activities," Lydia Bojorquez says, "were organized around the Girl Scout contemporary issues curriculum called 'Girls are Great.' This curriculum deals with issues that are important today to girls across the nation: physical changes in adolescence; divorce; child abuse; substance abuse; suicide. With

the input Juan got from community members, we carefully selected portions of the curriculum that met Pascua Yaqui concerns. Then we adapted these portions still further by recruiting community members to make presentations and lead activities. It worked well."

That first summer program was so warmly received that a number of positive things resulted. The tribe, through its preschool Director, Irene Sanchez, arranged to make the school's facility available as a weekly meeting place. A group of 20-30 girls continued through the school year to participate in the weekly meetings. And, when the one-week Scout program was offered this summer, 55 girls signed up and attended.

Positive results following the second summer session include four parents' (three mothers and one father) stepping forward to train as Scout leaders.

Sylvia Harlan feels her tribe has benefited from its association with the Girl Scout program. She identifies several specific advantages of working with the national organization.

First, by drawing on an already established and well-tested program, the tribe has not had to start from scratch. The national Girl Scout organization has spent a great deal of effort, time and money developing and refining its curricula, its structure and procedures. It offers clear guidelines, activity descriptions, and implementation instructions for developing and operating programs which focus on helping girls, age 6-18, develop self-confidence through exploring "five worlds." These worlds include: the world of well-being; the world of art; of people; the outdoors; and today and tomorrow.

Secondly, the Girl Scouts provides a support system to groups wishing to develop local scout programs. Technical assistance, and even temporary leadership, is available to help get troops going and support them if they flounder.

Third, there are resources. The Sahuaro Girl Scout Council, for example, has provided activity materials and supplies. It has also, on occasion, provided transportation and has helped fund some expenses.

But none of these advantages would be sufficient, Harlan believes, if there was not a commitment to flexibility. This flexibility is perhaps most graphically demonstrated by the manner in which the issue of the Girl Scout uniform is approached. Whether, and how, to use uniforms is left to the community. No girl is required to bring money into the scouting program. If uniforms are chosen, they are often gotten through a team effort. And often, a troop will choose to identify itself through just an emblem T-shirt.

Harlan stresses the fact that, in the Pascua Yaqui Girl Scout program, "we have never lost sight of the importance of offering our girls activities and experiences which fit our community, its special situation, and its values. The Girl Scout organization has encouraged us to take their programs and adapt them. We share the same basic goal of wanting to help the girls of Pascua Yaqui develop positive self-esteem, and we recognize that this can only happen if the Pascua Yaqui culture and people are respected and integrated into activities for our youngsters."

Has the Girl Scout program helped in terms of preventing alcohol and substance abuse among girls in the Pascua Yaqui community?

Sylvia Harlan admits that it is difficult, and too soon, to make a definite correlation between scouting and substance abuse prevention. But, she says, "we feel we are on the right track. Girl Scouting is providing our girls opportunities to develop healthy friendships, to laugh and share with one another, and move together in positive directions. Parents tell us that their girls feel better about themselves after participating in Girl Scouting events, events that clearly send the message that drugs and alcohol are not necessary. That's a good first step."

Information on the Pascua Yaqui Girl Scout program can be obtained from Sylvia Harlan, Director of Social Services, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, 7474 South Camino de Oeste, Tucson, AZ 85746.

The Boy Scouts of America also offers resources to tribes to help them establish and maintain scouting programs.

As do the Girl Scouts, local Boy Scout Councils will provide: assistance in getting community scouting programs organized; training for local volunteer leadership; on-going coaching of the leadership; program materials to be used by community troops; opportunity for affiliation and interaction between community troops and others throughout the state and country; access to camping properties and facilities maintained and operated by the scout councils; liability insurance; and recognition for scouts and leaders through established award and achievement programs.

Both the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts offer non-competitive achievement programs which provide tangible recognition—through a wide variety of badges and awards—for individual and group accomplishments.

Tribes, or sponsoring Indian organizations, must provide a meeting place as well as help in identifying and approving local role model leadership for the community troop.

Any tribe or Indian organization wishing to explore the possibility of establishing a Boy Scout or Girl Scout program should contact the nearest local scout council. Contact information for Boy Scout Councils and Girl Scout Councils may be obtained through the white pages of a nearby metropolitan area phone directory or by calling: Conrad L. Fruehan, Boy Scouts of America, 1325 Walnut Hill Lane, PO Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015-2079 at (214) 580-2125 or Sandy Taylor, Girl Scouts USA, 830 3rd Avenue, New York, NY 10022 at (212) 940-7330.

Fruehan and Taylor are national advisors to the American Indian Scouting Association which provides an annual seminar and a national network to help adults extend scouting to Native American youth.

## Support Groups Teach Students to Love Themselves

*Increasing numbers of tribal youngsters are learning to see themselves as valuable through the respect and interest shown to them in peer support groups which meet weekly in their schools or community.*

Through sharing thoughts and feelings in a safe, supportive environment, young people like those pictured above help one another to work through problems and to develop healthy attitudes about important life concerns, including those relating to substance use and abuse.

The following pages provide a description of a peer support program at the Window Rock Public High School in Fort Defiance, AZ, where 98 percent of the students are Native American. The Window Rock program focuses on supporting youngsters who are struggling with problems of substance abuse—either their own or someone else's. The program has been developed with the help of the Chemical Awareness Training Institute, a Phoenix, AZ, organization which

specializes in training school personnel and community members to facilitate youth support groups.

## THE WINDOW ROCK STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

Last year, 23 student support groups—each including 6-8 students and two trained adult facilitators—met weekly at the Window Rock High School on the Navajo Reservation in northeastern Arizona.

The first purpose of these groups, according to their coordinator Gary Davis, is to help each student participant explore his self-identity and build his concept of self-worth through working within a supportive social group. As a youngster's feelings of self-worth increase, Davis reasons, his tendency to take care of himself and make healthy choices increases. And, his risk for substance abuse and other social problems diminishes accordingly.

Davis says the groups work by focusing on an individual, offering that individual support and reinforcement as he addresses a problem or feeling that has meaning for him.

"Group support," Davis says, "is part of Native American cultures. The technique of healing a person through talking and listening is naturally comfortable for many Native Americans, whose traditions include talking circles and circle of life ceremonies.

This is not to say that students in the Window Rock peer support groups jump right into sharing their innermost feelings and concerns. "Our students," Davis says, "are like students anywhere. Many of those who are included in our groups are at-risk. Many come from dysfunctional families. There is a lot of denial and a lot of reluctance to expose these families. Our students, like any others, must feel secure and comfortable before they are willing to share."

To help create an atmosphere conducive to sharing, the Window Rock peer support groups have three strict ground rules.

The first is confidentiality. What is said in group,

stays in group. There are only two exceptions. Child abuse must by law be reported; and, if it is determined that a participant is in imminent danger of doing harm or being harmed, this also must be properly reported so help may be obtained.

The second ground rule is that the feelings of all participants must be respected. The third is that everyone has the right to pass (that is, not to speak) in group. This places each individual in control of what he chooses to share.

In addition, peer groups don't start out by immediately talking about feelings. "We start with activities that build trust," explains Davis. "We use non-threatening, fun games that help us comfortably explore parts of our personalities. Slowly, we become willing to take more risk by sharing more deeply."

Davis says that attempts are made to group participants in Window Rock's peer support program with some attention to commonality. "We form our groups in two ways. If we are able, we try to put youngsters together whom we feel share some common bond: background, situation, something. Or, if they come to us as an already formed social group, we encourage their staying together for a support group since we've learned that kids with similar problems have tendencies to be friends. If a group starts with some basis of commonality, the process goes more quickly."

Davis explains that there are four types of peer support groups at Window Rock, all of which are defined in some manner by their concern with substance abuse. One type focuses on "staying straight" for young people in recovery who want to maintain a chemically-free lifestyle. The second has an "insight" orientation for students who are currently having school, family or relationship problems because of their own substance abuse; the third is for students who are affected by the chemical use of people close to them; and, the fourth includes personal growth groups whose participants have never been directly or indirectly involved with substance abuse.

All four types of support groups give attention to cultural identity, Davis says. "In all of our groups, stu-

dents are concerned with their tribal identity. They've seen generations of cultural problems. They're trying to figure out if those problems are caused by influences outside the culture or by faults in the culture itself. Our support groups reinforce some important tribal practices and we show our students that these practices—supporting one another and sharing, for example—are valuable. If we can help revive these practices, we think we can help kids become and/or remain constructively motivated."

Students participating in the Window Rock peer support programs meet in their groups once a week during school hours. Some students miss class to attend, but do this with their teachers' approval and with the understanding that missed classwork must be made up.

Two adult facilitators are present in each support group meeting. These facilitators are trained through curriculum developed by the Chemical Awareness Training Institute. According to its director, Cheryl Watkins, the institute has trained over 600 Native American adult facilitators in Arizona and New Mexico. Training for these Indian facilitators has been provided on-site in their communities through tribal contracts, or individual tribal trainees have attended three-day regional sessions offered periodically in Phoenix. Attendance at these Phoenix sessions is generally around 25 percent Native American.

Facilitator training from the institute includes instruction and practice on how to run a support group; instruction concerning addictions, child abuse and neglect, grief and loss, sexual abuse, and suicide; and instruction on healthy living skills. Techniques are taught concerning how to get peer support groups started in a community or school and how to handle logistics once the groups are underway.

Facilitators play several roles in the support group. "They provide," says Watkins, " a warm, safe and trusting atmosphere by establishing group rules and structure. They provide gentle 'care-frontation' and feedback on behavior. They serve as positive role models in touch with and capable of appropriately disclosing

their feelings, thus setting the tone for group sharing. They are able to listen. They communicate acceptance and respect. They are not responsible for fixing the group members' pain but support and believe in the ability of the participants to make healthy decisions for themselves. Facilitators assist group members in working through their problems. They are knowledgeable about the grieving process."

"Facilitators," Watkins elaborates, "are responsible for making appropriate referrals. They do not 'teach' or 'instruct' but may assume a mediating role if interchanges among participants become disrespectful. The atmosphere in group work," Watkins continues, "is not always comfortable and non-confrontational but it must always be non-aggressive and respectful."

Watkins and Davis both stress that peer support groups do not provide psychotherapy. Instead, they offer a safe, supportive environment in which individuals are invited to share. Sharing, they emphasize, is by choice, not by confrontation or pressure.

Do peer support groups work? Do they help prevent and reduce substance abuse? Davis and Watkins say "yes."

Citing data collected by the Chemical Awareness Training Institute between 1982 and 1988, Watkins says: 71 percent of students in school support groups reported feeling increased self-worth; 61 percent indicated they decreased or stopped their use of alcohol and other drugs; 26 percent indicated a much greater awareness of the problems created through their use of chemicals; 60-70 percent indicated that group had positive effect on their ability to deal with problems, communicate, express feelings, and build healthy relationships; and 73 percent indicated that support groups may have helped them stay in school.

Information on the Chemical Awareness Training Institute's facilitator training may be obtained from Cheryl Watkins, 21 East Muriel, Phoenix, AZ 85022. Telephone: (602) 863-9671.

Information on the Window Rock High School program may be obtained from Gary Davis, Student Assistance Program Coordinator, Window Rock High School, Fort Defiance, AZ 86504.

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The text was written by Nancy Gale based on interviews with individuals working with Native American youngsters and self-esteem development programs. The names of these individuals are referenced in the text.

Some of the examples offered are based, in part, on articles and information contained in two information exchange bulletins published by TCI, Incorporated, an Indian-owned small business located in Washington, DC. The bulletins are: *Linkages for Indian Child Welfare Programs* and *Indians against Alcohol and Drug Abuse.* Nancy Gale is editor for these bulletins.

Masculine pronouns are used throughout the text as a means of making it easier to read. There is no intention to imply that problems of substance abuse are experienced more frequently or more severely by males than by females.

The photographs used in this booklet were taken by Danny Gale with the exception of those on pages 9 and 20, which were taken by Nancy Gale. All of the photographs were chosen to represent positive and healthy lives.

Copies of this booklet may be ordered, for printing and mailing costs, from the Native American Development Corporation, 1000 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite #1206, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: (202) 296-0685.

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